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Belize: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

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This series of reports has been prepared by Dr. Leon F. Bouvier, Senior Demographer and Research Associate at the Population Reference Bureau, in Washington, D.C., under a contract with the United States Agency for International Development (Grant No. 538-0000-S-00-3028). The author thanks AID for its support, and CARICOM for its role in the wide dissemination of the reports throughout the Eastern Caribbean region.

The data used in the preparation of the population estimates and projections were selected by the author. Their use in no way suggests their acceptance as official demographic statistics by the Governments of the Eastern Caribbean.

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Belize: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

by Leon F. Bouvier
April 1984

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Belize: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

Belize Yesterday

Prior to the 1861 census, the population of what is now the independent nation of Belize was extremely sparse—in 1835, it totaled 11,121. At all censuses prior to 1861 the population was concentrated around Belize city; no mention was made of settlements in the other parts of the then-colony known as British Honduras. Growth between 1835 and 1861, when 25,635 persons were enumerated, was due not so much to expansion in the Belize city area, which by then had grown to 5,067, but rather to growth in the Northern District through immigration from Mexico.

Between 1861 and 1901, the population of the nation of Belize grew at just under 1.0 percent per year, so by 1901 it totaled 37,479 (see Table 1). Little is known about the demographic variations that may have accounted for this fairly low rate of growth. It can be assumed that both birth and death rates were fairly high but it is particularly difficult to make estimates about migration, whether into or out of the region.

Crude birth rates of approximately 40–45 per 1,000 population and crude death rates of around 30–35 per 1,000 would about account for the growth from 1861 to 1901 and mean that net international migration was almost nil. That may well reflect the nineteenth century demographic situation in Belize: high fertility, high mortality, and little or no gain or loss through migration.

Table 1: Population of Belize, 1861–1931

Year	Number
1861	25,635
1871	24,710
1881	27,452
1891	31,471
1901	37,479
1911	40,458
1921	45,317
1931	51,347

Decennial counts of the population were taken in 1911, 1921, and 1931, followed by a census in 1946. By the latter year, Belize had a population of 59,220. Again, this represented annual growth of about 1 percent. Data on births and deaths are available for between 1931 and 1946, and thus some indirect estimates of net migration can be developed. While the population increased by 7,873 over the 15-year period, natural increase (that is, births minus deaths) amounted to 12,191.

Net emigration of some 4,300 people can therefore be assumed if the 1931 and 1946 censuses were comparable in coverage. Overall, this suggests an average crude birth rate of 36 per 1,000 population and a crude death rate of 21 per 1,000 for the period 1931–46. It also means that the rate of net emigration was about 5 per 1,000. Such a pattern may also have reflected the situation before 1931, although this cannot be known for certain.

By 1946, the crude birth rate was 34.5 and the crude death rate 17.0. This resulted in a rate of natural increase of 1.8 percent. From 1946 to 1960, demographic data for Belize improved substantially, due in large part to the seminal study by Caribbean demographers George Roberts and Jack Harewood.* The following discussion of the Belize population from 1946 to 1960 is based on their research.

Between 1946 and 1960, growth in Belize was very rapid. By 1960, the population had surpassed 91,000—some 32,000 more than counted 14 years earlier. This reflects

*G.H. Roberts and Jack Harewood, *Estimates of Intercensal Population by Age and Sex and Revised Vital Rates for British Caribbean Countries, 1946–1960* (University of West Indies, 1964).

Table 2: Population of Belize and Rates of Birth, Death, and Natural Increase, 1946–70

Year	Population	Crude Birth Rate	Crude Death Rate	Rate of Natural Increase
	(number)	(per 1,000 population)		(percent)
1946	59,220	34.5	17.0	1.8
1950	66,720*	40.3	12.9	2.7
1955	78,210*	45.0	11.2	3.4
1960	91,220	44.4	7.8	3.7
1970	119,934	40.0 (est.)	7.0 (est.)	3.3

*End-of-year estimates developed by Roberts and Harewood.

an average annual rate of growth of over 3 percent. Such a rate can be explained by the fact that in Belize fertility went up, mortality went down, and net migration was almost nil.

The crude birth rate, 34.5 in 1946, increased to 40.3 per 1,000 population in 1950 and reached around 45 per 1,000 in the late 1950s. This may well be the highest rate ever recorded in Belize. On the other hand, the crude death rate, 17.0 in 1946, gradually fell—to 12.9 in 1950 and 7.8 in 1960 (see Table 2). Overall, natural increase amounted to 31,270 (42,800 births minus 11,530 deaths). Another 730 people added to the population can be explained by net immigration.

This should not be taken to mean that gross migration was not substantial. Although it is difficult to verify, it seems highly likely that many Belizeans left their country around the same time that a number of immigrants from nearby Mexico and Guatemala entered the nation.

The rapid rate of growth noted immediately following World War II continued through 1970. By that time, the population numbered 119,934, which translates to an average annual rate of growth of 2.8 percent over the decade. In that ten-year period, fertility remained high while mortality fell a bit. Indeed, natural increase totaled 38,351.

Given this high level of natural increase, net emigration must have approached 10,000, or about 1,000 per year. Again, presumably many Belizeans departed, perhaps for the metropolitan countries of Canada and the United States, while still more Central Americans and Mexicans entered. Nearly 4,000 Belizeans emigrated to the United States during the 1960s (see Table 3).

The growth during the post-World War II period is remarkable and considerably larger than that noted elsewhere in the English-speaking Caribbean region. The population of Belize doubled between 1946 and 1970—a period of just 24 years. This means an average annual rate of growth of about 3.0 percent. Interestingly, it took 55 years for the immediately previous doubling—from 1891 to 1946.

Fertility, which had always been high in Belize, actually increased in the 1950s and 1960s. Mortality, high in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fell substantially in the postwar era. However, this reflects

Table 3: Permanent Belizean-Born Immigrants Admitted to the United States, 1955–79

Year	Number
1955–59	660
1960–64	1,069
1965–69	2,805
1970–74	2,485
1975	534
1976	661
1977	930
1978	1,033
1979	1,063

Belize's young age composition more than it does progress in extending life.

Belize has differed considerably from other English-speaking Caribbean countries in its international migration patterns. Except for the 1931–46 period, there is no strong evidence of any large movements away from the nation until the 1960s, when emigration apparently increased substantially.

Clearly, migration has been a tremendously important demographic factor in the cultural development of Belize. The shifts in racial and ethnic groups as a result of migration streams in and out of the nation have contributed to major changes in the composition of the nation.

Belize Today

Over the recently concluded decade of the 1970s, Belize's population grew from 119,934 to 145,208. This increase of 25,274 represents a decennial growth of 21.2 percent, or an average annual rate of growth of 1.9 percent.

Crude birth rates, hovering around 40 per 1,000 population in 1970, fell ever so slightly over the decade to 38.7 in 1973 and 38.5 in 1980. (By 1982 the crude birth rate was estimated to be 32 per 1,000.) Such a level of fertility suggests between 4.1 and 4.5 births per woman.

Mortality, on the other hand, fell substantially during the 1970s. In 1970 it was estimated to have been about 7.0 per 1,000. It may have fallen below 5 per 1,000 by 1980. A 1978 study by U.S. demographer William Groff indicated that life expectancy at birth in Belize in 1970 was a very high 70.9 years (69.4 for males and 71.6 for females). The combination of this high level with a very young population (median age about 15) makes an extremely low death rate not implausible.

The result of continued fairly high fertility and low mortality is a high rate of natural increase—well over 3.0 per year. These data imply that net emigration continued at a high level throughout the 1970s. Groff estimated it to be 9,836 for the four-year period 1971–74. And some 6,500 people moved to the United States during the 1970s.

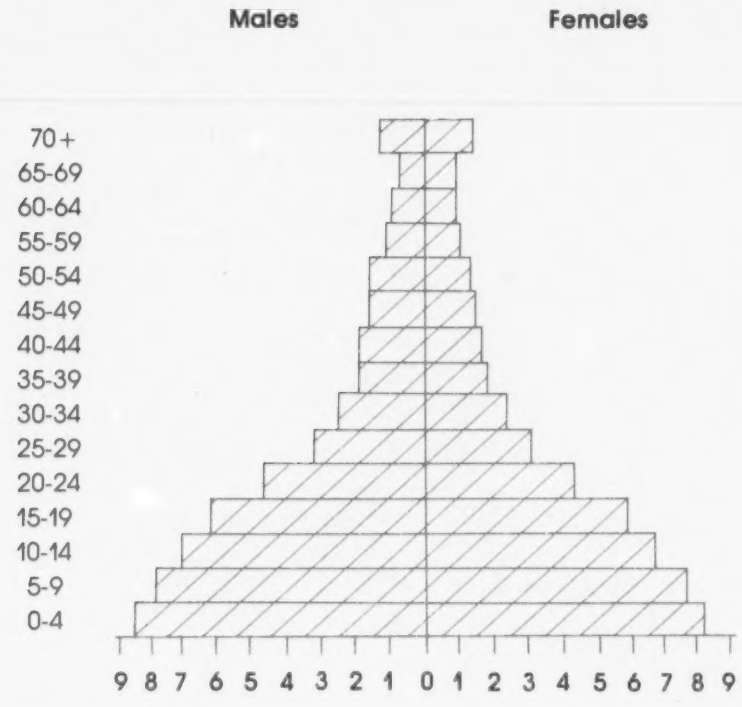
Using the 1980 census and the reverse projection technique,* it is possible to derive some fairly reasonable estimates of the decennial level of net emigration. It seems close to 15,000, with somewhat more women than men leaving the country. This figure yields an annual net emigration of 1,500. Natural increase over the decade amounted to about 40,000. This reinforces the estimate of 15,000 net emigration. That is to say, the Belizean population in 1970 of about 120,000 plus 40,000 (natural increase) minus 15,000 (net emigration) approximates the population in 1980 of about 145,000.

According to Groff's estimate for the 1971–74 period, gross migration (that is, the total number entering and leaving Belize) was much greater than the net migration; furthermore, it differed by race and ethnic background. Of the 30,000 or so who left the country during these four years, some 29,000 were Belizeans; of the 20,000 or so who moved to Belize, 16,000 were Mexican and 3,000 Guatemalan.

Nevertheless, at first glance the racial composition of the nation does not appear to have changed much since 1946 (see Table 4). However, different interpretations of race may have contributed to the similarities between the censuses. For example, "mixed" in 1946 included those of mixed European and African descent as well as mixed Spanish and Indian background (Mestizo). It is quite possible that the former were included under Black

*The reverse projection method "survives" the population by age and sex backward in five-year intervals. By using appropriate survival rates, a population—males aged 45–49 in 1980, for example—can be restored to the number who would have been 40–44 in 1975 and 35–39 in 1970. Assuming relatively complete censuses in both 1970 and 1980, any differences in the age-sex distribution in 1970 between the restored and the actual enumerated population must be accounted for by either immigration or emigration. This yields only a rough estimate of the level of net migration over a decade; nonetheless it is the best available, short of actual data on migration itself.

Figure 1: Age-Sex Distribution of Belize, 1980



(that is, Creole) in 1980. Caribs were counted as a separate group in 1946 but not in 1980.

Thus a racial distribution that appears to be very similar may indeed not be so upon further reflection. Turning to "language primarily spoken," 59.7 percent spoke English in 1946 and 22.2 percent spoke Spanish; by 1980, the respective proportions were 50.6 and 31.6. This lends further credence to the suggestion that the racial and ethnic composition of the nation is being affected by selective immigration and emigration.

Table 4: Racial Distribution of Population in Belize, 1946 and 1980

Racial Group	1946	1980
	(percent)	
American Indian	17.0	17.1
White	3.9	4.2
Black (Creole)	38.4	39.7
Asian	2.6	2.2
Carib	7.0	—
Mixed	31.1	33.2
Not Stated	—	3.6

The age distribution of Belize's population changed slightly between 1970 and 1980 (see Figure 1 for the distribution in 1980). The median age increased from 15 to 16.5 and the proportion under 15 years of age fell from 49.3 in 1970 to 46.1 in 1980. The proportion of elderly hardly varied—from 4.2 to 4.3. Most Caribbean nations experienced fairly significant variations in age distribution between 1970 and 1980, the result of drops in fertility. However, Belize's fertility fell only slightly and as a result it remains a very "young" nation.

The dependency ratio (the number of persons under 15 and those 65 or older per

100 persons aged 15–64), which serves as a rough indicator of a country's economic situation, was not noticeably altered—falling from 115 to 107 over the decade. In other words, in 1980 there were 107 persons of dependent age per 100 persons of active age—a high ratio compared with the situation in other English-speaking Caribbean nations.

Although few changes were noted in the proportional distribution of the population, numerical changes in important age groups are perhaps of more concern to the government and other institutions. Looking first at school enrollments, the population between the ages of 5 and 14 increased from 37,440 in 1970 to 42,734 in 1980—a gain of 5,294, or 14.1 percent. Although everyone that age may not be attending school, this age category serves as a reliable surrogate for actual school enrollments. Such an increase, if maintained in the future, must be taken into consideration when developing educational plans for the nation.

At the other end of the life cycle, the elderly population (those aged 65 or older) grew from 5,142 in 1970 to 6,685 in 1980—a 30 percent increase. Again, this suggests the need for further planning to be in a better position to assist these people, particularly if such growth continues.

The number of people in the important active years—between 15 and 65—also grew substantially: from 77,352 to 95,933. This increase of over 18,000 is particularly meaningful given the need to create additional jobs for this large group.

As Belize faces the future, it is in an unusual demographic situation. On the one hand, it is growing rapidly—despite continued net emigration. On the other hand, it remains sparsely settled and additional growth is certainly realistic and desirable, within limits.

The question of how that growth should come about remains unanswered. Perhaps the next section of this report will assist policymakers to arrive at more informed decisions as to future directions.

Belize Tomorrow

In this section of the report a variety of scenarios are developed that depict the size and age distribution of Belize under various assumptions about demographic behaviour. These should not be interpreted as predictions of the nation's demographic future; rather, they are projections of what the size and age distribution would be under certain clearly stated assumptions about future fertility, mortality, and migration.

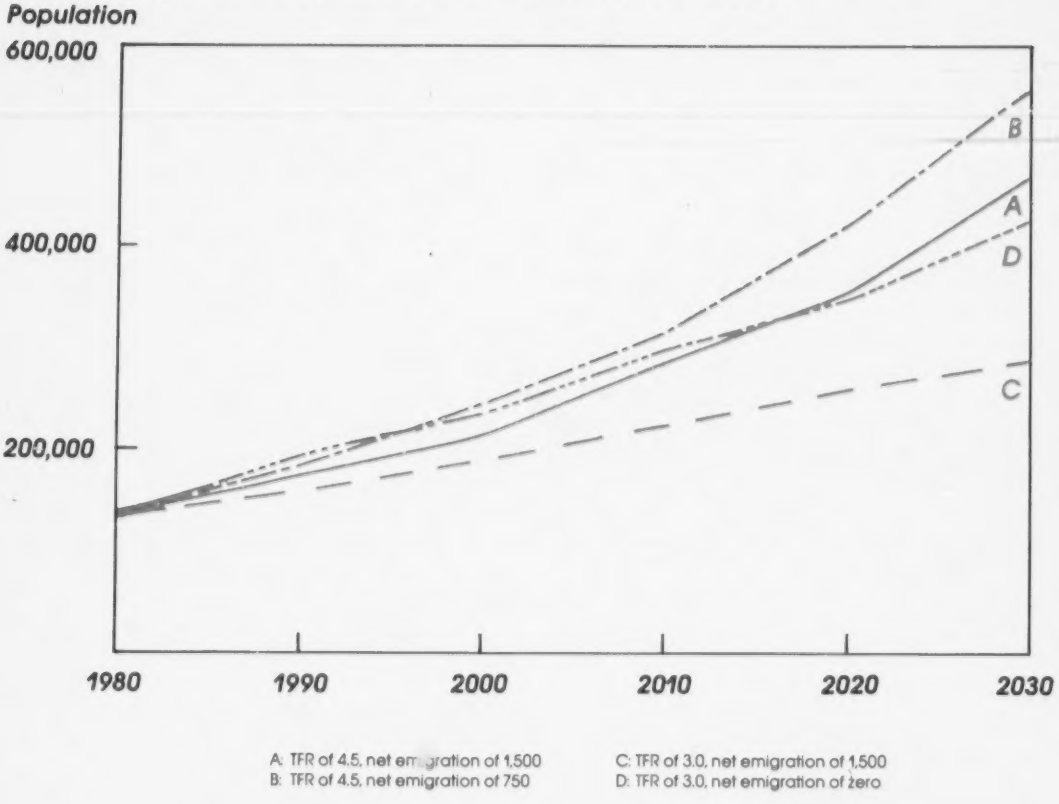
As already noted, Belize is currently underpopulated; growth, at least for the short run, is not seen as a major problem. Nevertheless, there are limits to all growth and, as will be illustrated below, the built-in momentum inherent in a young population, which Belize has, can lead to surprisingly large numbers in a rather short time. It is hoped that these alternative scenarios about future population size and age distribution will assist policymakers as they deliberate the future direction of the nation's size and composition, be it age, sex, or ethnic makeup.

Demographic Assumptions: Three different postulates of fertility behaviour are used. One assumes a continuation of the current total fertility rate of 4.5 live births per woman. A second assumes a decline in that rate to 3.0 by 1990, with no change anticipated thereafter. Finally, strictly for illustrative purposes, a total fertility rate of 2.1, again beginning in 1990, is used in one of the scenarios. This last rate is the level necessary to replace the population in the long run in the absence of migration.

Only one set of mortality assumptions is used. Female life expectancy at birth is expected to climb from 72.5 to 77.5 years by the turn of the century, with no further change after that date. For males, life expectancy is assumed to increase from 68.5 years to 74 years over the same period.

Three migration postulates are used in these projections. One assumes a continuation of the current level—that is, net emigration of about 1,500 per year. A sec-

Figure 2: Population of Belize, 1980–2030



ond hypothesis assumes that net emigration will be half that amount, or 750 per year. Finally, an assumption of net migration of zero is also included in the analysis. This would mean that as many people leave the nation as enter it—a real possibility, given current conditions in Central America.

Based on various combinations of these assumptions about fertility and migration, a number of scenarios for Belize have been prepared (see Figure 2; for supporting data, see Appendix Table A):

Scenario A – current fertility (4.5) and current net emigration (1,500 per year)

Scenario B – current fertility (4.5) and declining net emigration (750 per year)

Scenario C – declining fertility (3.0) and current net emigration (1,500 per year)

Scenario D – declining fertility (3.0) and net migration of zero.

Two other scenarios have also been prepared for illustrative purposes and will be discussed briefly. Both assume net migration to be zero. Scenario E, however, assumes a total fertility rate of 4.5 and F assumes replacement-level fertility of 2.1.

What these scenarios mean for the future of Belize is discussed in the remainder of this report. These selected alternative projections are but six of many possible combinations of fertility and migration, but they represent what appear to be reasonable hypotheses of the population directions the nation may take over the next 50 years.

Population Projections: A continuation of current demographic behaviour (that is, a total fertility rate of 4.5 and net emigration of 1,500 per year) would result in substantial and continuing population

growth. Scenario A depicts the future size of Belize under those conditions. By 2000, the population would reach 219,805, nearly 75,000 more than in 1980. By 2030 the population would number some 464,000—more than three times its current size. Furthermore, at that time, the rate of growth would be 2.6 percent, meaning a further doubling of the population in 27 years. Thus the million mark would be reached less than 80 years from today.

Such growth is enormous and is attributable to both the high fertility and the youth of the population. Nevertheless, such a projection is not fantasy; it could occur. Furthermore, it may be incorrect to assume that net emigration will remain at its current high level. The number of persons entering Belize from neighbouring countries has increased in recent years and such a pattern may well continue in the future.

Scenario B has been prepared with that in mind—a continuation of the current level of fertility but with net emigration reduced by half. The resulting numbers are awesome to contemplate: 244,427 by 2000 and over 565,000 by 2030, at which time the population would be growing 2.8 percent per year.

Although assuming net migration of zero is perhaps not plausible, Scenario E, which also assumes a continuation of current fertility, serves to illustrate what would occur under such conditions (not shown in Figure 2, but the data are in Appendix Table A). As expected, growth rates would be even higher. The population would reach 269,013 at the turn of the century and nearly 666,000 just 30 years later, when the annual rate of growth would be about 3.0 percent (which yields a doubling time of 23 years).

From these calculations it seems quite obvious that fertility cannot remain at the current high level for very much longer. Only if net emigration were to increase dramatically would the future size of the population be reduced to more manageable levels given such a high fertility.

If the projections using high levels of fertility—irrespective of emigration—seem inordinately high, then some reductions in fertility may be desirable. Scenario C illustrates what would occur if net emigration remained at the current level of 1,500 per year, but fertility fell to 3.0 live births per woman by 1990. By the turn of the century the population would be 192,230. In 2030, Belizeans would number close to 280,000 and the rate of growth would be 1.0 percent, representing a doubling time of 70 years.

Such an increase of some 135,000 over a 50-year period would seem to be quite tolerable, representing as it does an average annual rate of growth of 1.3 percent. Lowering the level of fertility from 4.5 to 3.0 in a mere ten years would present quite a challenge, but such rapid declines have already occurred in other developing countries like Costa Rica and Barbados. It is not an unachievable task, if indeed this goal is considered appropriate for the nation.

To be sure, to reach this goal lower fertility would have to be accompanied by continuing high levels of net emigration. A glance at Scenario D illustrates the impact of reducing that demographic variable to zero while keeping fertility at 3.0. By the turn of the century Belize's population would be 236,591 and the 425,000 mark would be passed by 2030.

A halving of current net emigration would of course result in a somewhat smaller population eventually. (Indeed, a combination of a total fertility rate of 3.0 with 750 net emigration per year would mean a population of about 215,000 in 2000 and 350,000 in 2030.) From these calculations, it appears that a substantial reduction in Belizean fertility would contribute to a slower rate of growth though a larger, and perhaps more manageable, population at least over the next 50 years.

As stated earlier, Belize's numbers will increase quite rapidly in part because of its youth. There is a built-in momentum for growth in such societies. Scenario F is illustrative of this momentum (not shown in Figure 2, but the data are in Appendix Table A). It assumes that beginning in 1990 Belizean women average 2.1 live births—the number needed to replace a popula-

Table 5: Percent Distribution of Population by Age-Group in Belize, 1980–2030

Scenario	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Scenario A						
Under 15	46	43	43	42	41	41
15–64	50	53	53	54	55	55
65 or older	4	4	4	4	4	4
Scenario B						
Under 15	46	42	43	41	40	40
15–64	50	54	53	55	56	55
65 or older	4	4	4	4	4	5
Scenario C						
Under 15	46	42	35	34	32	30
15–64	50	54	60	61	63	63
65 or older	4	4	5	5	5	7
Scenario D						
Under 15	46	40	35	32	31	29
15–64	50	56	61	64	64	64
65 or older	4	4	4	4	5	7

tion in the long run without any migration. Even in such a favourable situation Belize's population would still grow to 216,579 in 2000 and to over 310,000 in 2030. By 2050 it would be approaching a no-growth situation at around 360,000.

Such a growth pattern may appear illogical. However, it simply reflects the fact that the percent of youth in Belize is very large. As women pass through their reproductive years, even though they may only average 2.1 live births the number of women is so great that the number of births also grows. It takes two or even three generations of low fertility to eventually reach the point where deaths equal births. Thus even if fertility were to fall well below 3 live births per woman the population would still grow considerably in future years, even with net emigration.

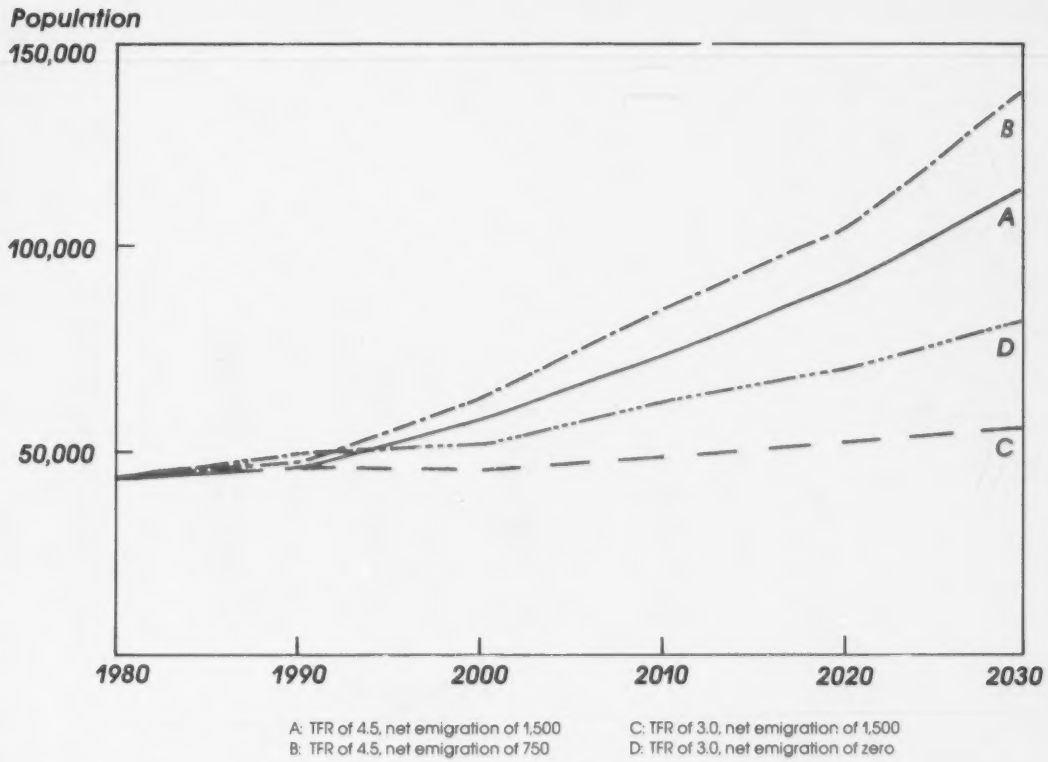
The important question remains: How much more should Belize grow? Once a goal is set, various combinations of fertility and migration can lead the nation in the proper direction towards achieving it.

Changes in demographic behaviour affect the age distribution of the population as much as they affect its size. According to the 1980 census, 46 percent of Belizeans were under age 15; another 50 percent were between 15 and 64; the remaining 4 percent were 65 or over. Under Scenario A or B, the proportion of youth would fall slightly over the next 50 years to either 40 or 41 percent while the proportion of the elderly would remain fairly static at 4 or 5 percent (see Table 5). As a result, the working-age population (15–64) would increase proportionately to 55 percent.

The slight decline in the dependent age population, whether young or old, would be an encouraging development. The dependency ratio would drop a bit, from 104 in 1980 to 82 in 2030. In other words, 100 working-age persons would support 82 dependent-age individuals in that year rather than the 104 in 1980.

Should the demographic patterns of Scenario C or D be followed, considerable progress in reducing the dependency ratio would be possible. This of course reflects the declining fertility assumed in both these scenarios. From 46 percent of the total population being under 15 in 1980, the proportion would fall to 35 percent in 2000 and to 29 or 30 percent in 2030. On the other hand, the proportion

Figure 3: School-Age Population (5–14) in Belize, 1980–2030



of elderly would grow to 7 percent in 2030. The changes in dependency ratio would be significant—from 104 in 1980 to 64 in 2000 and then to 56 in 2030. The impact of declining fertility is clearly considerable and independent of the level of net emigration.

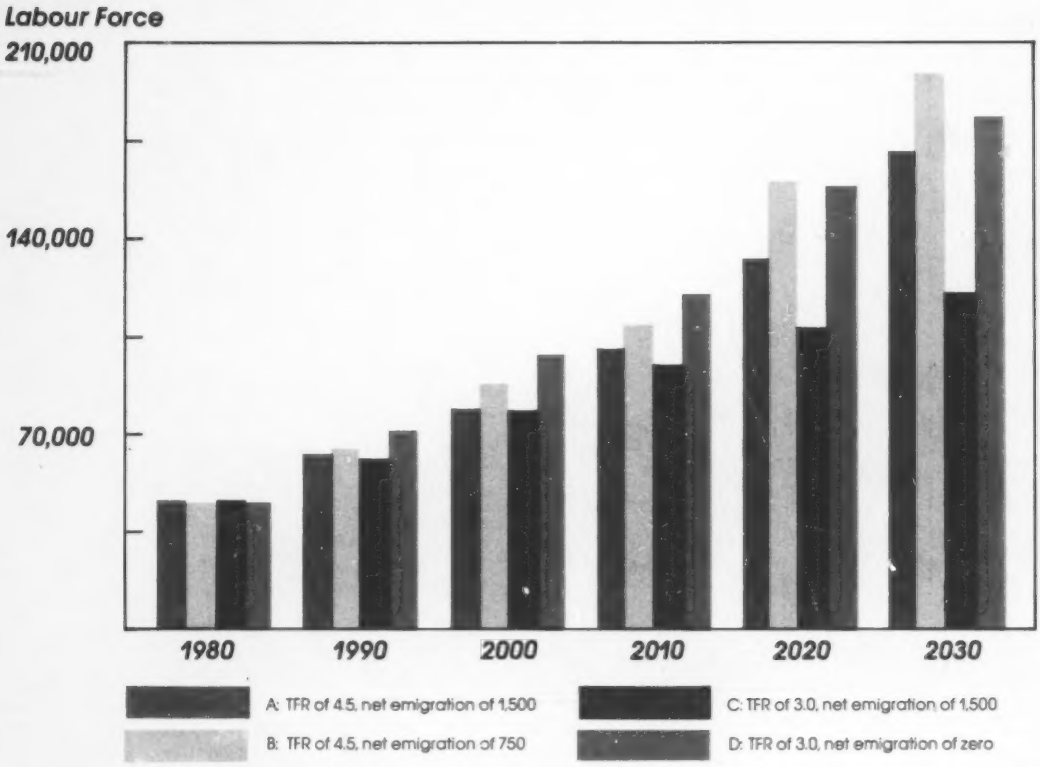
More important than changes in proportions among age-groups is the change that may occur in the size of important groups, such as those in school, in the labour force, and among the elderly. Although rates are important, numbers may well be more significant for planning purposes.

School Enrollment: In lieu of updated information on actual school enrollments, the population of 5–14 year olds is relied on as a surrogate for the number enrolled in schools. For most developing countries, such a procedure generally serves the purpose quite adequately.

In 1980, a total of 42,734 persons between 5 and 14 were enumerated in the Belizean census. A continuation of current levels of fertility and migration (Scenario A) would lead to substantial increases in future years (see Figure 3; for supporting data, see Appendix Table B). By the turn of the century that population would increase by 16,000, or 38 percent. And the number in school would almost triple within 50 years, to over 117,000. With decreased net emigration (Scenario B), school enrollments would grow even more rapidly—to 64,394 in 2000 and to over 140,000 in 2030, which would be getting close to four times the current level.

Only through substantial declines in fertility can school enrollments be kept within manageable limits. Under Scenario C the number would increase slightly, to 44,119, by the turn of the century and then grow by another 10,000 and top 54,000 in 2030. Thus if Scenario C comes to pass, over the

Figure 4: Labour Force in Belize, 1980–2030



50-year period 1980–2030 school enrollments, as defined in this report, would increase by a mere 0.5 percent annually. A reduction in net emigration would result in larger school enrollments. Yet even if net migration equalled zero (Scenario D), the number of children in school should only reach 52,097 in 2000 and just over 80,000 in 2030—providing of course that fertility remains at 3.0 live births per woman.

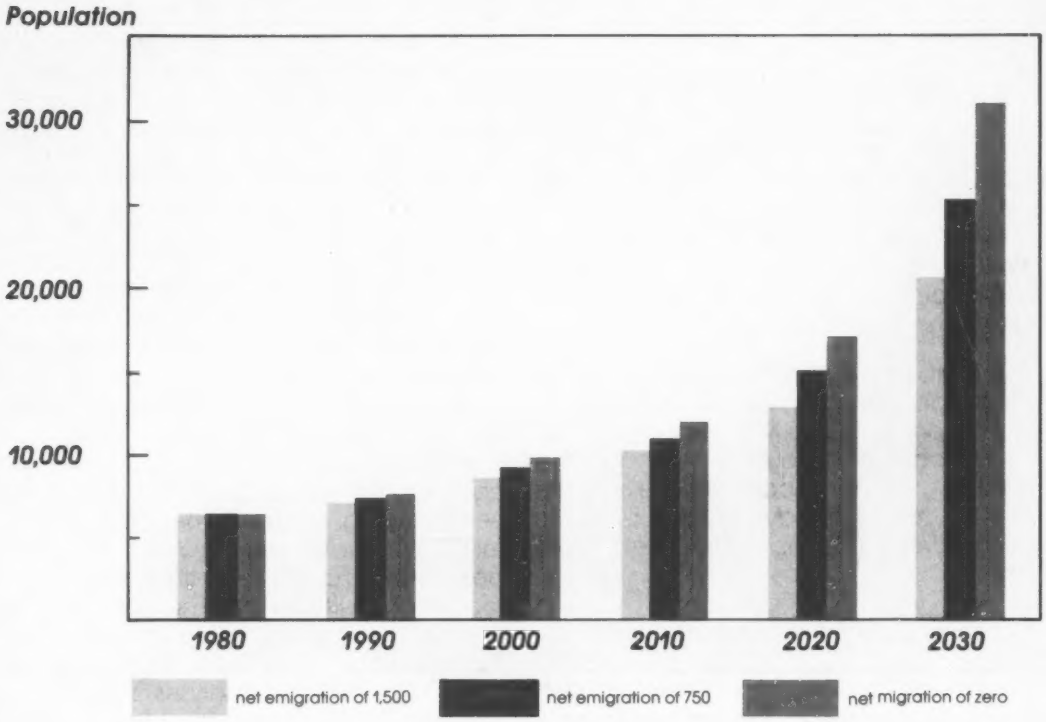
Labour Force: Like most other Caribbean nations, Belize is on the verge of an explosion in the size of its labour force. This report uses the labour force participation rate projections developed by the International Labour Office for the region.

Under Scenario A, a continuation of current demographic behaviour, the number of people in the labour force in the year 2000 would be 78,873, compared with 46,927 in 1980 (see Figure 4; for supporting data, see Appendix Table C). As the unemployment rate is currently around 15 percent, 7,000 Belizeans are out of work but looking for a job. To this daunting number could be added the many who are underemployed.

Simply keeping pace with this level of unemployment requires that some 28,000 jobs be created between now and the turn of the century if fertility and net emigration remain unchanged. By then some 12,000 Belizeans would be unemployed. The labour force would continue growing in the twenty-first century and by 2030 would surpass 170,000—well above the size of the total Belizean population today!

Irrespective of scenario, the labour force will grow significantly not only in the long run but also in the immediate future. Furthermore, any imminent declines in fertility can only affect the size of the labour force after the turn of the century.

Figure 5: Elderly Population (65 or Older) in Belize, 1980–2030



Looking at Scenario C, where fertility is low and net emigration is high, the labour force is projected to increase from its current 46,927 to 78,839 by the year 2000, about the same as under Scenario A. Thirty years later, however, the labour force would only total about 120,000, compared with over 170,000 if the fertility level stays at 4.5, reflecting the lower fertility cohort after 1990 entering the labour force some 15 years later.

Any decline in net emigration could have serious impact on the size of the labour force. Under Scenario D, with zero net migration, the increase is enormous—to 99,400 in 2000 and close to 187,000 in 2030. A combination of lower fertility and continued fairly high net emigration seems to be the only way to slow the growth of the labour force.

The increases expected in the number of people who need work reflect the higher fertility of the 1960s and 1970s, which together with falling mortality contributed to a large cohort of young people now in the job market. Furthermore, these projections are quite reliable given the fact that these people are already born. As this cohort passes through its life cycle it will pose potential problems for the society.

The Elderly: Just as Belize can be certain of an unusually rapid growth in its labour force, so too can it be certain of a later growth in its elderly population. The same large generation that will need jobs in the next 40 years will be approaching retirement sometime after 2020.

Under all scenarios the number of people 65 or older will grow considerably in future years (see Figure 5; for supporting data, see Appendix Table D). Fertility differentials are irrelevant given the fact that all the elderly in 2030 are already born. In

1980, 6,685 elderly people were counted in the census. By the year 2000 that number will reach between 8,500 and 10,000 depending on the level of net emigration.

A continuation of the current demographic pattern (Scenario A) would result in an elderly population of nearly 21,000 in 2030, three times today's size. Without any net emigration that number would be over 31,000. Furthermore, as noted earlier, the elderly will comprise a somewhat larger portion of the total population in that year than is the case today.

This growing number of persons of retirement age will pose special problems for the nation, particularly in the provision of health care and housing. Although the numbers will not reach massive proportions for awhile, it may be appropriate to begin planning in the near future for that time.

Conclusion: Belize's population will undoubtedly top 200,000 by the year 2000 and is very likely to reach 300,000 well before 2030. Indeed, the figure might be much higher than that if fertility remains high or if net emigration is limited.

Compared with the island nations of the Caribbean, Belize is in a very different situation. It is underpopulated, by any measure, and can tolerate additional growth. This is not the case with the small islands of the region. The question facing Belize is twofold: How much more should it grow and how should that be accomplished?

The first question relates to optimum size, be it 300,000 or more. Clearly, a continuation of the present rate of fertility will lead to a nation of perhaps a half million inhabitants within 50 years, at which time growth rates would still be high. The second question relates to its immigration policies. Recent levels of net emigration have not told the entire story of the changing composition of the nation. Although many Belizeans leave their homeland, a significant, though smaller, number enter from neighbouring countries. Because of the many complex issues involved, Belizean policymakers are faced with a difficult demographically related situation. It is hoped that the projections prepared for this report can be of some assistance. But much more detailed analyses are needed if they are to guide policymakers striving to determine what is in the best interest of the nation.

Appendices

Table A: Current and Projected Population of Belize, 1980–2030

Scenario	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
A	145,208	174,209	219,805	279,754	358,749	464,229
B	145,208	184,252	244,427	323,033	426,837	565,171
C	145,208	169,914	192,230	222,397	251,148	279,826
D	145,208	189,352	236,591	295,059	357,200	425,747
E	145,208	194,268	269,013	366,238	494,809	665,946
F	145,208	185,840	216,579	253,157	285,138	310,925

A: TFR of 4.5, net emigration of 1,500
B: TFR of 4.5, net emigration of 750
C: TFR of 3.0, net emigration of 1,500
D: TFR of 3.0, net migration of zero
E: TFR of 4.5, net migration of zero
F: TFR of 2.1, net migration of zero

Table B: Current and Projected School-Age Population (5–14) in Belize, 1980–2030

Scenario	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
A	42,734	47,302	59,024	74,818	91,782	117,376
B	42,734	48,110	64,394	84,418	106,837	140,563
C	42,734	47,302	44,119	49,281	52,707	54,334
D	42,734	48,903	52,097	62,139	71,405	80,052

Table C: Current and Projected Labour Force in Belize, 1980–2030

Scenario	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
A	46,927	61,501	78,873	101,764	133,644	172,197
B	46,927	65,672	88,856	111,377	161,004	203,159
C	46,927	60,801	78,839	95,270	109,014	121,635
D	46,927	70,543	99,400	122,726	160,360	186,675

Table D: Current and Projected Elderly Population (65 or Older) in Belize, 1980–2030

Scenario	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
A and C	6,685	7,088	8,872	10,215	13,032	20,966
B	6,685	7,274	9,395	11,240	15,245	25,623
D	6,685	7,459	9,917	12,264	17,458	31,280

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